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THE MEANING OF THE ETHICAL MOVEMENT

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TO

PROF. FELIX ADLER,

UNDER WHOM I SERVED MY APPRENTICESHIP

FOR TWO YEARS

IN NEW YORK CITY,

THIS ADDRESS IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED.

"The Free Man meditates on life rather than on death."—*Benedict Spinoza.*

"The true dignity and excellence of man lies in his moral qualities, that is, in virtue; virtue is the common inheritance of all."—*From a Translation of The Encyclical Letter of Pope Leo XIII. on "The Condition of Labor."*

GIFT
MRS. WOODROW WILSON
NOV. 25, 1939

The Meaning of the Ethical Movement.

I.

What is the significance of the new Emphasis on Ethics which is so manifest both in Europe and America? It would almost seem as though a different spirit were abroad. What does it imply? We have been asked this question again and again. It appears to be assumed that we could answer it in a single word. There are so many different methods by which to grasp or express the meaning of reforms. Men do not appreciate the contrast between movements that can define themselves through a body of formulas or a declaration of principles, and others which can only explain their purpose as a spirit or tendency. It is this latter characteristic which illustrates the new emphasis now being laid on Ethics. It has no creed, but it is rather a spirit. It is not a particular reform, but a world-tendency.

We are to remember that whatever deals with human character as such, is also linked with emotions; and we cannot define the latter in mathematical speech. When I ask a person what does he cling to life for, he may know perfectly well; but he cannot put it in words or express it in a single sentence. We judge a man's nature by what he does. In the same way we are to make up our minds with regard to historic movements and reforms, by what they are trying to do, by the spirit they display, or by the trend of character that may be observed, and not by any declaration of principles.

It would be quite impossible to locate this new Emphasis on Ethics among any particular body of men. It is becoming apparent everywhere. The universities of learning and the schools of philosophy give signs of it. We may discern it in the late encyclical letter of the Pontiff. It is manifest among the laity and the clergy; it is felt deeply outside and inside of the churches. No institution and no class of men may claim exclusive monopoly of this new tendency.

We refer to it as *new*. By that I do not wish to imply that it has just appeared in the world. On the contrary, we could rather say

that, as a teaching, it had its birth among the great Ethical Leaders of by-gone ages—Buddha and Socrates, Isaiah or Jesus. The "Sermon on the Mount" is distinctively and more than anything else a discourse in Ethics. When, therefore, we refer to it as new, we think of it rather, as in part, only a revival. We are only sounding a neglected chord in history. Men have to take up once more an aspect of religion, awakened chiefly by those inspired seers of earlier times. They were the leaders. We have to carry it on, although we may be the modest and reverent disciples of their spirit, rather than of their exact teaching. I can but feel that that is what they themselves would have preferred that we should do.

This emphasis in the direction of Ethics means, if it means anything, that instead of consecrating human attention and enthusiasm on worship, we are to concentrate it rather on *the way we live and work*. It indicates, therefore, a reversal from the usual process of teaching. We are to pay regard to human character more than to what men believe. A man's conduct may determine more clearly just what he is, than his opinions about the Deity.

There is this one difference between ordinary beliefs and those that are concerned with religion. The latter are something which can not in the full sense be imparted through instruction. They may be accepted in that way by the mind, but they do not then become an essential element in a man's whole self. They have to grow out of a person's own life and experience, else they cannot well have permanent influence. What a man is, rather than what he has been taught, is liable to determine what he actually thinks about God. The important consideration, therefore, would be, rather to awaken the spirit of that Being in a man's heart, than to fill his mind with a certain belief about that Being. The great consideration would be to induce men to care more to live the kind of a life followed by Jesus, than to throw the emphasis of feeling and enthusiasm on the worship of Jesus. Instead of preaching belief in a Deity, love of Christ or faith in the Bible, would it not be better to endeavor to develop that kind of heart in men, to stimulate that form of outer and inner life, by which they would be lead of their own accord to come to the True Love, the True Faith, or the True Belief.

Religious teachers everywhere, I believe,

are becoming conscious that something must be done to put an end to this appalling difference between what a man believes and the way he lives. If making him believe just right does not induce him to live just right, possibly a reversal of that method would be more successful. It is essential that something be done, and that quickly, toward refining and elevating human character. It may be possible to accomplish this by turning human attention toward what the world is suffering, toward the needs of our fellow men, toward the perfection and purification of our inward nature, just as much as through the sublime Sacraments of the Church. Religious people are as a rule much more fond of the "Gospel of St. John" than they are of the "Sermon on the Mount." That beautiful Gospel gives rich emotions; it kindles love and adoration. The trouble with the Sermon on the Mount has been that it *exacts too much*; nevertheless it is true that if more attention is not given to that Sermon, that is, if more emphasis is not laid on Ethics, we may begin to observe a decline in the power or influence of Judaism or Christianity. People much prefer the emotional to an *applied* religion. But applied religion means an Ethical Movement.

It is to be understood that I am simply giving a personal opinion on this great problem, at the close of these five years of effort. My convictions on this question come through direct contact with men. This Ethical Movement now presents itself to me as an existing fact. It may have been this long before, to others; but it had not been so to my own consciousness. I have seen it to some extent do actual work. It has grown and developed in my thought, from this experience and these observations; and now it stands before me in another and a brighter light, than when the first word was said here five years ago. For me it has stood the test. It has been tried on; it has accomplished results; it has influenced men in their lives; it has altered their spirit. It is not a question whether the outcome has been little or much; that does not affect my own thought, whatever influence it may have on other people. It has proven to me that men could do something beside "talk and speculate." I grow tired of philosophy. For ages the debate has gone on as to the true idea of the Deity, the historic value of the Scriptures, the relative worth of the various sects or religions. But amid all the discussions there existed the other press-

ing query, why something more could not be done to influence the *lives* of men. To make one individual a better man, to inspire him with higher motives and purer purposes, may be worth for the future of the world as much as to prove or to disprove the historic value of any Bible.

The one great problem for me was, if the enthusiasm could be concentrated on this other issue, the way we live and work, the kind of character we develop, and the human relationship in which we stand—whether it could inspire reforms, give strength to the enfeebled will, and induce persons to labor more for the benefit of their fellow men? If it could accomplish that result in the case of one single individual, the problem for me was settled. Human nature in its elements is everywhere the same. It matters not at the present moment whether this tendency or change of emphasis has reached few or many. If it could have such effect on one man, in ages to come it might have the same effect on all the world. Little by little, here and there an instance, I have seen this new spirit accomplish that result.

And now at the end of these five years of work, my own attitude of mind is taken. I

believed formerly in this work theoretically as a possibility. Throughout these various years in all the efforts, it has never crossed my mind to doubt it. To-day I believe in it as an established fact. From this time on this new spirit or tendency that I see spreading abroad, is lifted for me above the question of momentary success or failure. It makes no difference to me now in my belief with regard to it, whether any special effort in this direction triumphs or succeeds. If I knew that after another generation the movement were to die out, the new emphasis to have lost its force, if there should not be a single person in all the two hemispheres lifting up his voice for this other aspect of religion, if there were no organized effort in this new direction, it would not alter in the slightest degree my personal conviction. From the little that has come under my observation in these last few years, it now stands to me as indubitable belief, that in the ages to come—though when and how far off I cannot say—this spirit or tendency amid every change, will be the one securely surviving fact for the future religion and the future Church; just as I am satisfied that it had its start *as a teaching* in those early leaders, whom we look upon as

the founders of the existing religions and the existing Church.

This experience has established for me the fact that the disposition to mutual helpfulness lies back in human nature, and is prior in its origin to any or all specific religions. It has made certain in my mind the fact that the human will has something to lean upon in itself; that there is a craving after a higher life in the human consciousness, whencesoever this spirit may have been given. And I stand as firm to-day in the conviction, from practical experience, as I stood five years ago from abstract reflection, that this moral impulse, with its hunger after righteousness, will rise into ever greater and greater significance, as human nature advances to a clearer comprehension of its own character and possibilities.

Human nature has a saving *motive* in itself, whencesovever the saving power may come. We can trust to this, and rely on it in hopefulness, whatever possible changes may or may not come in the world's historic faiths.

What this new Emphasis on Ethics is to mean, could, of course, be expressed in a bare, abstract form. It implies a deeper understanding of a certain truth; and, on the other

hand, it conveys the greater appreciation of the way that truth should manifest itself in human society. We carry in our minds the consciousness that from earliest times the attention of mankind has been centred on the two ideas, of "God" and the "Law of Right." But there is another fact that has been slowly developing in the thoughts of men, and that is, that this something called "The Law of Right" stands in equal consequence to what we call "God." It, too, is immutable and unchangeable, which "was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." To this Law of Right we are to pay the same respect, awe and reverence, which we may also pay to the idea of God, This would be the abstract truth conveyed to us in the Sovereignty of Ethics.

Ethical science is to establish the fact that there is a Law of Right-Living, which we are to implicitly obey, just as the science of theology may strive to establish the truth that there is a Deity, whom we are loyally to worship. This law should hold and continue firm, exact the same unswerving submission from our will-power, independent of whatever might occur or of whatever changes might take place, in that other science of theology. This was the

abstract truth, which came to me, as it has to many others, and that I have wanted to teach and preach and help to establish in the minds of other people. This was the point to which I had come, on leaving the library, the study or the university.

But it has to be acknowledged that my understanding of the actual meaning of this work and what it has to do, has changed very much, because it has become enlarged for me. Experience can do for a man's opinion what all the thought and study in the library can never accomplish. It is one thing to have a certain belief which you have formed through long reading and speculation in the history of human thought, or in the world's universal history; it is something quite different *to try it on*, to put it to the test in daily life, where history is now being made. The libraries are crowded in their upper shelves with such worn-out beliefs or reflections. No man ever takes down those dust-covered volumes, save the antiquarian.

The schools of learning and the daily life of the great majority of men constitute two different worlds. They rarely come in direct touch with one another. We lead such a peculiar existence in universities. We are absorbed in

Plato or Buddhism. Homer and Francis Bacon are as near to us as our next-door neighbors. It is a life of pure reflection. Within that atmosphere of intellectual activity we think on the world's problem. We decide about human needs and, perhaps, work out in our thoughts the formula by which to establish or bring about the millennium. We travel and observe, we try the various universities; and then, when we assume that we are ready, the task begins of going out and putting the thing into operation. We undertake to bring our discoveries to the every day experience of men. We fancy that the world is eager and waiting to be helped. We are ready with our intellectual panacea; we set about to apply our formula and change the world.

What a shock we have when we once begin the effort! What a shiver of dismay runs through our veins when we set out to effect these changes and bring about this higher life among men! It was all so charming in those moss-grown seats of learning, where the problem of life was only an intellectual enigma that could be solved by a process of thinking! And then we discover that the world outside is leading an entirely different life and takes

interest in altogether different things. It has little concern about the study of history; it cares less for abstract speculation; it does not know very much what we mean by pure reflection. The man in the library has been solving the world's problem. The man outside at work has been solving the other and more important question, of what to do within the next twenty-four hours. We discover by going out among men, that they are much more interested in *real living*, than in abstract reflection about the nature of life. What people want is a religion for what they are doing, rather than a world-philosophy. At last the student and thinker, after chafing internally at what he considers the grubbing existence of the every-day man, wakes up some morning to the sudden conviction that he has been wrong in his method and that the other man was right. Reforms cannot have their full genesis in the library or the university.

Will it be forgiven me if I am to this extent personal in saying that this has been my own experience! I, too, wanted to help or reform the world with a philosophy. There was, in my thought, an intellectual panacea. According to my fancy, the result was to be

accomplished by getting at the minds of men and altering their convictions. What I discovered was, that the something men wanted, was not a philosophy of existence, but an answer to the question, "What is to be done just now?" *Life at this particular moment* is the pressing problem. Religious teachers are to be interested in what the rest of the world is interested. Practical life is what calls for our attention. Frankly, it must be acknowledged that I have learned more in this respect from the men I sought to help, than I have been able to give help to them. Instead of endeavoring to draw men away from this intense, on-rushing life of the world, up into the pure life of the spirit; it became plain to me that the thing to be striven for, was to put the life of the spirit out into that eager, on-rushing life of the world.

It may do very well to constantly lay stress in beautiful or abstract form on the principle of righteousness. Religious teaching has been doing that, at least to some extent, for the last three thousand years. But the trouble has been, and still is, that men are very much disposed to have lofty feelings about righteousness, *while going on living just as before;* precisely as men have been inclined to worship

the Deity, rather than to have in their hearts the real *spirit* of God.

The new Emphasis on Ethics cannot stop with merely talking about the abstract truth. We shall accomplish very little by merely throwing the stress of our enthusiasm on the idea. The pressure of attention needs to be rather on this Law of Right-Living as put in actual operation; so as to find those methods by which we can realize it in concrete form in the world. It is just at this point where is to come the distinguishing feature of this new tendency. Religious teaching has been losing its influence on the public mind, because it could not apply itself to the actual daily affairs of human life. It has been almost impossible to find the bond between the week day and the Sunday. Whether, by throwing the stress on moral questions, it may be possible to restore the right kind of hold for religion, is the problem to be solved by a true Ethical Movement.

What has to be done is to shift the stress of attention in public religious teaching to a different line of subjects. There needs to be an appeal to another class of emotions. Instead of saying so much about worship, we are rather to bring human thinking to the

practical questions of right and wrong. We should touch on those issues which are not far away, or concerned almost exclusively with the life beyond the grave, but those also which press close, very close, on the life of the week day. Men are rather to be made to think how they are living; they should have their attention called to the mistakes in their doing. Practical righteousness is now the theme which calls for burning attention. It is the habits of life which are being neglected, the human relations that are being forgotten. We are living, and must live, the life of the world. Men are not given now-a-days a gospel by which to preserve the finer feelings, while living that life; the motives for obedience to the sense of Duty are not stirred or worked upon, while men are in the world. We must bridge over this chasm. We are not to make the religious secular, but to make all that is secular truly religious. How we are to live just at this moment, what is my duty at this immediate hour, how am I to act in my relations with my fellow men, what are my responsibilites to the family, to the city or the state? These are the burning questions that need to be discussed and agitated.

II.

What is needed is that we should lay stress on just those special elements of religion, which are quite independent of any changes that may come through historic research or philosophical speculation. This, it appears to me, would be the one method, by which to make the religious spirit absolutely sure and abiding for all coming time. There is just one place to look for those elements, and that is in human nature itself. That is the one thing which is universal. What we find there is sure; because every man can know it by looking directly into his own consciousness. Philosophy or science cannot touch it.

There should be something upon which all men could sympathize. The Brahmin, Mohammedan, Jew and Christian all have a common human nature. There should be something in them all, which could draw them all together.

Now I believe there is one element or fact universal in human consciousness, and that is *the desire to be a better man.* It may exist very faintly; it may almost perish from the heart. We may have become practically callous to the desire; but it has been in us at some

time or another in the course of our lives. No man in the depths of his feelings really is altogether content with what he is just at this moment; he would always like to be something else, a trifle better, a little further along in the scale of being. On this one issue the difference between men is only a matter of degree. All persons could join hands on this one element of religion, whether it be the Bedouin Arab, the African savage, or Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Why not make this the starting point for the new effort in reform? Why not work on this universal desire? We all want to be better ourselves; we would like to have more perfect relations with men; we would be glad to have a higher social ideal.

The new Emphasis on Ethics therefore would have for its purpose, to bring to the foreground this universal desire for something better and higher in ourselves and in human society. It would have for the subjects of its consideration every sphere where this motive or element could enter and be of consequence. For example, it implies that we should give supreme attention to such problems as "What is Justice?" It reminds us that we are to study and dwell on the theme "How Shall we

Preserve and Develop the Higher Life?'' It indicates that we are to take up such questions as ''The Ethics of Trades-Unionism.'' It thrusts on us the subject ''Can a Man be Strictly Honest and be Successful in Business?'' It reminds us that if we do not give more concern to these problems, religion itself will die out in the world. It would have us consider what kind of motives we should most encourage and develop in the human heart, for the sake of ourselves and our fellow men.

It would not have us forget that there is a moral element in our political institutions. We are to study the influence of Jefferson and Hamilton and what they have done for us in this regard, just as religious teachers used to study exclusively the work of David or Saul and what they had done for the history of Israel. Every nation is a chosen people. It is all sacred history. We must search for the moral element everywhere. We are to see how it has appeared and what influence it has exerted, through the great minds, such as George Eliot, Humboldt or Shakespeare. We are to think of the lives of leading men in past history, catch the stimulus of their effort, and make them an influence still. We

are to look for the good everywhere; to lose no trace of it wherever it may have appeared. We are to keep this particular element of religion persistently before human attention. We are not to admit that there is anything secular; we must make it all divinely religious. In a word, we are to be pressing, always pressing forward the perpetual query, "What is True Righteousness?"

And I believe, in the true sense, we are to apply to this our purpose — in all reverence and single-heartedness — the same degree of ardor and enthusiasm, the same high feeling, the same sense of awe and consecration, which men have been accustomed to feel and display exclusively when they talked about Jesus or about God.

The moral element is sacred everywhere. True devotion may consist not only in uttering beautiful thoughts or feelings about the Infinite and Unchangeable, but also in the kind of life we lead, or in the kind of character we develop. This element is the divine thread running through history. Instead of giving our exclusive attention to the source whence it comes, shall we not also think and reflect on the thing itself? How to make this life on earth better and higher — that is the theme

which at the present moment should be the supreme object of human attention; and in giving it that degree of interest, in the best sense, we are paying the truest worship to the Infinite Power that men call God.

It is true that this new movement can never draw to itself the general enthusiasm that may be given to the study of science or history. There is another purpose in view. A different kind of feeling is awakened. Those who make a special study of history and natural science, are usually disposed to lay stress on the fact of universal progress,—on the tendency upward in nature and the human world. What the Ethical Teacher has to do is precisely the contrary. He is to discourage men from trusting to the outside methods or to the results of nature. He has to stir them to feel that what they have to do, is to render their share in helping forward this progress. He has to dwell constantly on selfishness everywhere; he has to point out the difference between class and class; he has to lay stress on the lack of business integrity; he is forced to be always telling men that the world is not going to be any better unless they make it better themselves. Bare study in science and history, leads men to feel com-

fortable. It awakens a trust in the law of evolution. It induces people to sit still and think the world is going to develop itself. What this other teaching has to do is to awaken a practical sense of discomfort; to make men unhappy; to arouse in them a feeling of disquiet,—in order that they may be impressed with the circumstance that it rests upon them to do a portion of the world's work; that, in a word, they are to be the agents themselves to bring about this evolution.

For this reason, it may be assumed that this new tendency is a radical movement. We touch at this point on the difference between the true radical and the true conservative. The latter individual is said to lay stress on the circumstance that the present situation is about as good as the conditions admit of, and that, if changes are needed, they come themselves by the process of evolution. The radical always feels that the world can and ought to be better, and that we can make it better if we try. Science and history do their work on the mind; ethics has to influence the will. It is a painful task always to be asserting the unfavorable conditions. It would be easy and pleasant to take the attitude of the optimist. But, as a matter of fact, the majority of men

will always incline enough, as it is, to that position; they will only be pessimists with regard to what might happen to themselves. The truth, nevertheless, stands fixed and plain: The world is not right! What we have to do is to change and improve it. To emphasize and repeat over and over again this assertion, must be one of the functions of the new Ethical Movement.

It is to be admitted also that this movement can never, in the full sense of the word, become *popular* with men. It may be many generations, if not centuries, before it can have the sympathy of the millions. Its stress must always be on the less tangible elements of reform. Its leaders must be idealists. Their interest and enthusiasm will be centered on the changes which are to be effected in individual character, rather than in the transformation to be brought about in the social organism. But the average world is more interested in externals. Men cannot all of them be idealists. What is outside of us must absorb a great deal of human attention; naturally the majority will be thinking rather of the changes *there*. The Ethical Teacher will also be interested in those changes, but he will always be looking at them with the ulte-

rior purpose, as to how they are going to permanently influence the lives of men.

The science of ethics must assume it for a fact, that the elemental source or root of action is human motive. The great problem, therefore, is how this supreme element is to be influenced and elevated. Reforms which do not affect motives, will not come to stay. This new movement, therefore, is compelled rather to keep forward the fact which has been gathered from the laws of all history,—that improvements in institutions can never rise very much above the level of the individual human nature for which the improvement is intended. This is the one truth liable to be forgotten by the social agitator. The difference between him and the ethical teacher must be, therefore, mainly a question of stress. It is quite true that external changes must go hand in hand with reforms in the internal nature or character. The two will mutually act and react upon one another. But the neglected feature is more often this element of improvement in the inner self of the human being. It is essential, therefore, that a certain class of men should lay the emphasis of their teaching in this other direction. But, at the same time, it is equally true that the

Ethical Teacher should also be something of a Social Agitator, just as the Social Agitator should be something of an Ethical Teacher.

It is to be admitted also that this new emphasis must be, to some extent, cold and austere. There will be less of the emotional in its efforts, than in the worship of the supernatural. At the same time this is partially a matter of accident, and may not be a permanent condition. Religious feelings have been for ages connected more especially with that which is remote and super-sensible. What goes on before the eyes in the week-day life of men, has been too often regarded as common-place. Morality, right living, righteousness, these have suffered; because they are almost exclusively concerned with this daily life of men here on earth. It takes a long time for a neglected element to become enshrined once more in our most sacred feelings. But who shall say that the period may not come, when men shall transfer a part of those feelings of awe and sacredness to what concerns just this every-day life; until we have removed from human thought the notion that any event can be common-place save to the common-place soul. We may then be able, in the full sense of the word, to have the Law

of Right-Living stir our hearts with all that is best, deepest and purest in religious emotion. The social ideals at the present time already have that refining, exalting effect on certain persons. Men have died for the cause of justice, as others have died for their faith in God.

It is inevitable also that there should be the one noticeable weakness in this new Emphasis on Ethics, which always seems to go with a new reform movement. We have to confess it in humility and shame. It has been a defect of the Radicalism which desires changes or reforms in human thinking or character, that men usually want them more especially *for other people*. They desire movements by which they can prove themselves right to the rest of the world. They would like to convince other men of their own superior intellectual position. They would be glad to have this Ethical Movement exist as an agitation to establish freedom of thought in religion, and to argue away the beliefs of other men. There are people who would be very glad of reforms which would give them more of the goods of this world; but when it comes to reforms in their own feelings or character, they prefer to have other persons make the first experiment.

But if the new Emphasis on Ethics has one work more than another to do, it is to make it plain that if men have any care to improve and change the rest of the world, they must do it by first changing and improving themselves. The higher religious spirit, the finer feelings, the purer elements of character, come to men less through preaching than by example. What we have to accomplish is to make it plain to all the world, that whether we may or may not retain the old beliefs, we still do care to rise in the moral sphere, and that we still have it in us as a motive to labor for the welfare of our fellow men. If we ever prove this in our own lives, then even though we never preach nor teach, nor organize a Church, we shall have laid the foundation for a new Ethical Movement.

No, the higher Radicalism has another task before it. We are at the critical epoch in human history when the aspirations of men are at the moment of decline or shipwreck. It is not a question of convincing persons as to this or that or the other position, either in morality or the sphere of religion. Men do not change their elementary beliefs from argument. I care not whether other individuals accept my particular utterances or opinions.

It is not a question of laying down or establishing any special theory of reform. It is rather the consideration of persuading ourselves and other men, to view this life of ours in all its details from another and higher standpoint. What we need to do is to induce men to think, think, think on these questions in the sphere of morality.

The great purpose before us to-day is not to eliminate or do away with other men's beliefs; but to put down if we can that contemptible parvenue called "expediency," which more than anything else is making rotten our whole modern civilization. The world is beginning to talk about character as men talk about the tariff. It is what they call business. It is just these habits of mind which are so perilous. If we can once change *this way of looking at things*, I feel that the final result will take care of itself. If men will let that desire, to be better themselves and to have a better human society, act as a motive and as a consideration in their thinking and their conduct, then in the long run this other higher habit of mind will shape life and our social institutions in the right direction. What a man is interested in, the way he has of looking at things, will have

more influence with him than any particular views or opinions that we may give him. A true Ethical Movement therefore need not concern itself with giving special opinions or theories. Its works should be, to be constantly viewing life from this other standpoint, treating every issue from this higher consideration; and so, little by little, more and more, influencing these interests and general habits of viewing the world.

What matters it, therefore, whether the ethical leaders may be right or wrong in their specific opinions on particular questions! What they are to accomplish is not to convert men to their personal views; it is rather, by giving utterance to these other feelings, by constantly discussing questions from this other stand-point, that they stamp it on the consciousness of men, that there is some other kind of a standard than this vile upstart termed Expediency. If we do not effect this, nature itself will make us feel the penalty. These "treasures of earth" can no more be taken up into the soul, than they can be carried with us to Heaven.

This Emphasis on Ethics has changed somewhat in its meaning for me. It was to me, for the most part, a series of negative proposi-

tions. To-day it is something positive and real. I have done with the spirit of denial. My consciousness is filled with the one thought, that *we have a work to do*. There is no use in having any statement of principles. There should be a sense of union just through the common spirit we feel. We may differ in a multitude of ways; we may each have our own views as to specific reforms. One may be an individualist; another a communist; a third may lean to socialism. We may belong to different political parties. We may have our own basis of philosophy. One may be an intuitionalist; another may lean to utilitarianism; some may find their help more from Emanuel Kant, others may draw it from Hegel or John Stuart Mill. We may think diversely with regard to the idea of immortality or of God.

But amid all these differences there is this common purpose: we are convinced that there is this higher standard. We are to keep on talking about it, studying it, making it the basis for our judgments of ourselves and of the rest of the world. The problem now is, not what is to be thought, but what is to be done. Human ambition has changed; it is bent now on getting something out of

this life on earth. There is no use struggling against the tendency. The mastery over nature has given the multitude a hope which can never again be quenched. While the natural world was so much of a mystery, it cowed human effort. It is still something of a mystery; but men have learned, nevertheless, how to use it. The human will is set now on asserting its mastery, determined to find a life worth living in this present existence.

An Ethical Movement must meet this situation. Never in all history has there been an epoch when civilization was in greater peril. We may get all the physical comforts, we may acquire the mastery over nature; and yet at the same time the finer feelings may die out from the hearts of men. "Man cannot live by bread alone." With these new discoveries there is the appalling danger that the human mind may misuse its opportunities, and that the higher aspirations may perish from neglect, under the influence of these new gifts and revelations.

Religious teaching can have but one task at the present moment before it: it must adjust itself to these new conditions. For a time, it may have to look away from the subjects which have heretofore absorbed its attention.

The problem now is: how shall we keep up the higher standard of character, the purer motives, which alone can perpetuate our civilization. Righteousness now must be made to mean something, or it will die away from the earth. It must nó longer be a hymn; it dare no further be simply a beautiful ideal. Abstract speculation must be brought within the sphere of utility. We must determine what is that Law of Right-Living; what it means here, and now, at this very moment, in these new conditions; what it implies for us personally, as well as in the life of the home; what it should be in all our social, economic and political institutions.

I know well what it means to discuss these questions. We can all appreciate the difficulty that is involved in Applied Ethics. The capitalist class is anxious and worried when we treat of Nationalism, Trades-Unionism or Socialism. The mere agitation of a question appears often like a concession to that position. Yet who, after all, should deal with such problems, if not Ethical Teachers? These questions are in everybody's thoughts; they will be discussed under any circumstances. Surely it were far better to bring them to some extent within the sphere of

moral agitation, than to leave them as exclusively the problems of business or economics. The working class is anxious that we should take sides with them, and choose just their reforms. It distrusts us because we cannot take just their standpoint. Nevertheless, the Ethical Leader is the one individual who dare not side with any *class*. He is to struggle with all his might to inculcate that higher spirit of reform, that should include all classes, because it is universal.

It has been said that in laying this new Emphasis on Ethics we are giving up the old faith. Persons have intimated that they could not sympathize with us, because, as they said, it was impossible to surrender their feeling for the prophets or for Jesus. What that means it is not easy for me to understand. Did *they* not talk about practical righteousness? For my own part, in dealing with this vital question, I feel myself nearer to the spirit of Isaiah and Jesus than when I am attending the service of the Church. Others have said that, what we were trying to do was, after all, to convert men back to the old religions, to restore their faith in the characters of the Bible. What this means, too, I cannot understand. If this truth or spirit

for which we are contending, be exclusively contained in the old religions; then I say, with all my heart, let us all, every man and woman, go back and take up the old religions. My supreme attention is on this one fact or this one consideration. Whence it came; who gave it birth; who may claim its possession,—all that is of no consequence to me. Those are the questions which we can safely leave history to solve, by its own process of evolution. But this other problem, what is to be done here and now in elevating and purifying the hearts of men, in lifting once more the standard of morality, in quickening and enlarging inward motives, this is what we dare not leave to the mere external laws of development. It is what we ourselves must do and accomplish.

But while we are centering our interest in this one direction, in what we teach and in what we preach; it is not to be forgotten that a book, a sermon or an address which may not once mention the names of the prophets, of Jesus or of God, may nevertheless be full of the *spirit* of the prophets, of Jesus and of God.

And so I believe there should be Societies organized for the exclusive purpose of laying

this new Emphasis on Ethics. Books may be written upon it; but that is not enough. The press may agitate it, and that may help. The Church may contribute its share. But they cannot any of them do the work completely. If we are to bring a neglected element in religion back into its true significance and importance in history, we may have to do it by giving, for the time being, almost our exclusive concern to it. In order to accomplish the result, it may even be necessary to give this aspect an *exaggerated* degree of interest.

Furthermore, I believe that such Societies should hold their services and have their addresses or sermons, not simply during the week days, but on Sunday mornings. It is essential that the peculiar significance attached to that period of the week, be brought to bear on this particular aspect of religion. We must make it emphatically clear that ethical problems are not secular. We must throw about them the peculiar feelings of depth, sacredness and consecration, that belong to a religious service. By doing this we shall not be antagonizing, but rather helping forward the cause of religion. Christendom has consecrated that one day to the

deepest problems of existence. We need to take that time for these practical questions of right-living, in order to make it clear that they too belong to those deepest and most important problems. By the very separateness with which we emphasize this other tendency, we must establish its identity with that which is highest and best in religion. People should be invited to the services, just as they would to the services of the Church. They may be members both of Church and Ethical Society. They may go on one Sunday to one, and on another Sunday to the other. But the Ethical Society should do its work by itself, in order to give the necessary degree of *stress* to its efforts in the new direction.

But if there should be separate Ethical Societies devoted to this one purpose, there should also be a special class of lecturers or clergy, educated in this other particular direction. Instead of being taught in comparative religions, they should have courses in economics and political science. Instead of the study in theology, there should be years of preparation given to the history of philosophy and the science of Ethics. In place of so much time being given to the literature of the Hebrews, they should rather have pro-

longed training in the ethical tendencies of the great writers of the modern world. Instead of constant devotion to abstract problems, they should give their attention to Applied Ethics. They should be familiar with the labor problem, with the social and political agitation of the day. Their one purpose should be to bring the moral standard to bear on practical issues in the sphere of commerce, social and personal life, or the state. They should not be men of the library or the study; but in the highest sense, they should be men of the world.

This Ethical Movement must be a practical faith. It should be a business man's religion. It ought to be a busy people's religion. The most cultured and refined can draw help from it. The most illiterate and ignorant can learn something from it. Culture comes rather in the very process of living, than in the search after knowledge. Refined feelings develop by the way we act, just as much as through any form of worship.

Religious teaching all over the world needs to lift on high once more this banner of justice and right-living. It should beg and plead; it should urge that men weigh public and private questions from this stand-point. The

work has begun; it has touched the hearts of the few. The tendency is abroad. Serious minds are catching its spirit. The Church itself is developing in this new direction. An Ethical Movement is arising everywhere, without distinction of sect or creed. It consists of the serious and earnest individuals who, in the presence of this possible downfall of high character and nobler manhood, are becoming more and more willing to forget the other differences, to lose sight of all diversities of belief, in order to concentrate their interests in rescuing this moral standard from extinction. The spirit which now exists among a few, may by and by reach out over the world; and then all the world will be an Ethical Society.

And so I conclude by giving, perhaps, the most beautiful expression that has yet appeared in literature, with reference to a possible Ethical Church:

"There will be a new church, founded on "moral science; at first cold and naked, a "babe in a manger again, the algebra and "mathematics of ethical law, the church of "men to come; but it will have heaven and "earth for its beams and rafters; science for "symbol and illustrations; it will fast enough "gather to itself beauty, music, pictures,

"poetry. Was never stoicism so stern and "exigent as this shall be? It shall send man "home to his central solitude; shame these "social, supplicating manners; and make him "know that much of the time he must have "himself to his friend. He shall expect no co-"operation; he shall walk with no compan-"ion. The nameless Thought, the nameless "Power, the super-personal Heart—he shall "repose alone on that. He needs only his "own verdict. No good fame can help, no "bad fame can hurt him. The Laws are his "consolers; the good Laws themselves are "alive; they know if he have kept them; "they animate him with the leading of great "duty and an endless horizon. Honor and "fortune exist to him who always recognizes "the neighborhood of the great — always "feels himself in the presence of high "causes." — *Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

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